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OTHER MATTERS

Venue of the sessions of the Governing Council

Note by the Administrator

1. In its decision 92/3 of 14 February 1992, the Governing Council decided to review the issue of the venue of its sessions at the thirty-ninth session (1992) and to include such an item in its provisional agenda.

2. In the same decision, the Governing Council also decided to transmit the text contained in document DP/1992/L.5 entitled "Venue of the Governing Council" and requested the Administrator to provide further information on, inter alia, cost estimates of holding a session at Geneva or in New York.

I. BACKGROUND AND LEGISLATION

3. The Governing Council has considered the question of the venue of its sessions on a number of occasions. In reviewing the Council's consideration of the question of its venue, a starting-point can be made with General Assembly resolution 41/213 of 19 December 1986 on the review of the efficiency of the administrative and financial functioning of the United Nations.

4. In recognizing the need for significant measures to improve the efficiency of the administrative and financial functioning of the United Nations, including improved efficiency in the area of conferences and conference servicing, the General Assembly decided, in paragraph 1 of its decision 41/213 that "the recommendations as agreed upon and as contained in the report of the Group of High-level Intergovernmental Experts to Review the Efficiency of the Administrative and Financial Functioning of the United Nations 1/ should be implemented by the Secretary-General and the relevant organs and bodies of the United Nations ..." (emphasis added).

Recommendation 4 of the High-level Group relates specifically to the question of venue of meetings of United Nations bodies: "the existing principle that United Nations bodies should meet at their respective established headquarters, as provided for in General Assembly resolution 40/243 of 18 December 1985, should be strictly enforced." However, General Assembly resolution 40/243 of 18 December 1985 contains some exceptions to the principle that United Nations bodies should meet at their headquarters location; in particular, paragraph 4 (a) states that: "the regular sessions of the Governing Council of the United Nations Development Programme shall be held alternately at United Nations Headquarters and at the United Nations Office at Geneva."

5. In essence, in its resolution 40/243 the General Assembly affirmed rule 1 of the rules of procedure of the Governing Council, which states, inter alia, that: "unless the Governing Council decides to accept an invitation to meet elsewhere, regular sessions shall be held alternately at United Nations headquarters and at the Geneva office of the United Nations."

6. One of the many ancillary effects of General Assembly resolution 41/213, was that the question of whether UNDP should meet exclusively at United Nations Headquarters arose at the thirty-fourth session of the Governing Council (1987). The issue of comparative costs associated with holding Council sessions at headquarters or at Geneva was examined by the Budgetary and Finance Committee (BFC) (DP/1987/70).

7. Based on information provided by the secretariats of the United Nations and of UNDP, the BFC noted that (a) savings accrued to UNDP by holding the sessions at headquarters; (b) savings accrued to the United Nations by holding the sessions in Geneva; and (c) overall, by holding the thirty-third session (1986) of the Governing Council in Geneva, savings accrued to the United Nations system as a whole. The BFC also noted that it was not in a position to deal with the substance of the question and that the issue could be decided only by the Governing Council at its plenary meeting. Following the BFC review, the Council decided, by its decisions 87/53 and 88/1, to hold its thirty-fifth session in Geneva.

8. The question of venue was not reviewed at the thirty-fifth session (1988) of the Governing Council, but the issue of venue, change of name, and timing of sessions was considered at its thirty-sixth session (1989). After due deliberations, the Council adopted decision 89/63, of 30 June 1989 by which it decided: "to inform the General Assembly, through the Economic and Social Council, that the Governing Council wishes to maintain the status quo with respect to the venue and name of the Council." The status quo referred to in Council decision 89/63 was that in paragraph 4 (a) of General Assembly resolution 40/243, cited above.

9. At its thirty-eighth session (1991), the Governing Council again considered the subject of its venue. In its decision 91/50 of 21 June 1991, the Council decided "to review the issue of the venue of sessions of the Governing Council at its organizational meeting to be held in February 1992

and further ... to include in its provisional agenda of that meeting an item entitled "Arrangements for the Governing Council: venue".

10. It should also be noted in this connection that the General Assembly, in paragraph 5 (c) of the annex to resolution 45/264 of 13 May 1991, adopted the following measure regarding the Economic and Social Council: "One substantive session of four to five weeks to take place in alternate years in New York and Geneva between May and July".

11. In accordance with the resolutions of the General Assembly, the substantive sessions of the Economic and Social Council are held in Geneva in odd years and in New York in even years while the sessions of the Governing Council are held in Geneva in even years and in New York in odd years.

II. BUDGETARY REVIEW

12. In analysing the incremental costs between the two venues, two distinct categories of costs are involved. Costs relating to the conference services for the Governing Council are charged to the budget of the United Nations. Items not relating to conference services (e.g., travel) are charged to UNDP. The analysis presented here focuses on the incremental costs of a location.

13. At the request of UNDP, the Office of Programme Planning, Budget and Finance of the United Nations has provided full cost estimates at 1992 rates for the thirty-ninth session of the Governing Council should the venue be (a) Geneva or (b) New York. The full cost estimates are contained in annex I. It must be stressed that the estimates provided by the United Nations are full cost estimates. More specifically, full cost estimates are based upon the theoretical assumption that no part of the conference services provided can be met from the existing Secretariat. Unit rates are established for translation, interpretation, etc. and form the basis of the estimates. Full cost estimates differ from the actual costs in that actual costs refer to the incremental costs incurred above and beyond the services provided by the existing Secretariat. The cost estimates for charges to be borne by UNDP are presented in annex II.

14. In addition to the categories of costs discussed above, costing similar to those provided in annex II for UNDP are presented in annex III for the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the Department of Economic and Social Development (DESD).

15. Information regarding attendance during the 1990 and 1991 sessions indicates that more Governing Council members (299 versus 259) as well as more representatives from specialized agencies (62 versus 44) and United Nations bodies (47 versus 31) attend sessions in Geneva than New York. Also, more Governing Council members (165 versus 125) as well as more specialized agencies (26 versus 18) send representatives from their respective capitals and headquarters (other than Geneva and New York) to Geneva sessions than to sessions of the Council in New York. However, more observers (313 versus 194) attend sessions in New York.

16. In reviewing comparative costs, it should be noted that financial considerations are one of the elements considered in the past by the Governing Council when selecting its venue.

Notes

1/ Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-first Session, Supplement No. 49 (A/41/49).

Annex I

FULL COST ESTIMATES AT 1992 RATES FOR THE THIRTY-NINTH SESSION OF THE GOVERNING COUNCIL SHOULD THE VENUE BE (A) GENEVA OR (B) NEW YORK, PROVIDED BY THE OFFICE OF PROGRAMME PLANNING, BUDGET AND FINANCE, FOR INDICATIVE PURPOSES ONLY

A. Organizational session (1992)	New York ($'000)
Pre-session documentation	
(212 pages: A,C,E,F,R,S)	235.6
(392 pages: E,F,S)	200.7
	436.3
Meeting servicing	
(Interpretation: supporting staff, e.g. Conference Officer)	
(10 meetings: A,C,E,F,R,S)	48.3
In-session documentation	
(15 pages: A,C,E,F,R,S)	18.2
Summary records	
(Precis-writing, translation, revision, typing, reproduction, distribution)	
(10 meetings: E,F,S)	78.9
Post-session documentation	
(40 pages: A,C,E,F,R,S)	44.1
Technical and other services	13.0
Subtotal, conference-servicing costs	637.8

B. Thirty-ninth session (1992)	Geneva ($'000)	New York ($'000)
Pre-sessional documentation (Translation, revision, typing, reproduction, distribution)		
(953 pages: A,C,E,F,R,S)	875.7	1 061.8
(1,448 pages: E,F,S)	664.8	778.7
	1 540.5	1 840.5
Meeting servicing (Interpretation: supporting staff, e.g. Conference Officer)		
(120 meetings: A,C,E,F,R,S)	605.8	579.5
In-session documentation (Translation, revision, typing, reproduction, distribution)		
(300 pages: A,C,E,F,R,S)	302.6	358.0
Summary records (Precis-writing, translation, revision, typing, reproduction, distribution)		
(40 meetings: E,F,S)	265.8	315.7
Post-session documentation (Translation, revision, typing, reproduction, distribution)		
(200 pages: A,C,E,F,R,S)	178.2	217.7
Technical and other services	125.0	125.0
Subtotal, conference-servicing costs	3 017.9	3 436.4
Total, conference-servicing cost	3 655.7	4 074.2

Annex II

ESTIMATED INCREMENTAL COSTS TO UNDP OF THE GOVERNING COUNCIL
4-27 May 1992 a/

		New York	Geneva	Incremental cost
		(United States dollars)		
1.	Travel	23 360	267 100 b/	243 740
2.	Communications c/	-	8 000	8 000
3.	Minibus rental	-	7 500	7 500
4.	Temporary assistance	10 000	22 000 d/	12 000
				271 240

a/ Items for which the costs are the same have been excluded.

b/ Travel costs relate to a cadre of 38 UNDP staff whose participation for the full Governing Council session is required. In addition, provision has been made for 248 days of attendance by other UNDP staff for specific items. Incremental travel funds, where necessary, have been included for these purposes.

c/ Includes fax, telephones, pouch, cables, etc.

d/ Includes driver for vehicle, and pre-session secretarial support.

Annex III

A. United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA): Cost estimates

		(United States dollars)
Airfare for 17 staff		24 000
DSA (254 days for 20 staff)		48 000
Extra general operating expenditures		
Communications	3 000	
EDP leasing	2 500	
Vehicle rental	3 500	
Miscellaneous	1 000	
	10 000	10 000
Total		82 000

B. United Nations Department of Economic and Social Development (DESD): Cost estimates

	(United States dollars)
Airfare for 4 staff	4 300
DSA (80 days for 5 staff)	12 960
Extra operating expenses	300
Total	17 560